

Message Text

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PAGE 01 SEOUL 04294 240158Z

ACTION EA-09

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TAGS: SOPH, PFOR, MARR, KS, US

SUBJECT: KOREAN PRESS REACTION TO RECALL OF GEN. SINGLAUB

SUMMARY: IN THEIR TREATMENT OF GEN. SINGLAUB'S RECALL, KOREAN NEWSPAPERS HAD A FIELD DAY CITING OTHERS WHO ALSO OPPOSE WITHDRAWAL. DESPITE EMOTIONAL TONE OF DISCUSSIONS PRINTED, CONCLUSIONS DRAWN ARE GENERALLY MILD, TYPICALLY CALLING FOR "WISE JUDGMENT" IN FORTHCOMING CONSULTATIONS.

END SUMMARY

1. FROM MAY 20-22, KOREAN PRESS GAVE TOP COVERAGE TO RECALL OF GEN. SINGLAUB TO WASHINGTON FOR HIS STATEMENTS OPPOSING TROOP WITHDRAWAL FROM KOREA. IN COMMENTARIES, PAPERS VOICED CONCERN WITH FATE OF GEN. SINGLAUB, POINTING OUT THAT HIS OPINIONS WERE NOT NEW BUT SHARED BY MANY U.S. MILITARY LEADERS. CHOSON ILBO QUOTED THREE NATIONAL ASSEMBLYMEN THAT U.S. MUST NOT "REPEATEDLY COMMIT THE MISTAKE" THAT RESULTED IN KOREA'S DIVISION FROM IGNORING GEN. MACARTHUR'S
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"OUTSPOKEN ADVICE." POLITICAL COLUMNS QUOTED FOREIGN MINISTRY SOURCES POINTING TO "SERIOUS" DIFFERENCES OF OPINION BETWEEN STATE AND DEFENSE DEPARTMENTS OVER WITHDRAWAL AND SOME SOURCES SPECULATED SINGLAUB'S STATEMENT WOULD DAMAGE USG POSITION IN CONSULTATIONS.

2. CHOSON ILBO FEATURE IN PARTICULAR NOTED SINGLAUB'S

COMMENTS HAD AIR OF "OPEN CHALLENGE" TO CARTER'S POLICY ON WITHDRAWAL. OTHER PAPERS SAW RECALL OF SINGLAUB AS MAKING A "SCAPEGOAT" OF ONE GENERAL TO WARN U.S. MILITARY CARTER WILL NOT TOLERATE FURTHER OPPOSITION AND AS REAFFIRMATION OF WHITE HOUSE DETERMINATION TO PURSUE POLICY WITH "ICY COLDNESS." SEVERAL PAPERS POINTED OUT SUPPORT FOR RECALL FROM CONGRESS (CHURCH AND CULVER), WHILE NOTING STRATTON'S REQUEST FOR SINGLAUB TO TESTIFY.

3. TONE OF PRESS ARTICLES WAS GENERALLY EMOTIONAL AND INDICATED PARTIALITY FOR SINGLAUB'S "REALISTIC" VIEW. TONGA ILBO EDITORIAL MAY 21 ALLUDED TO "ABSURDITY" OF IDEA AIR FORCE ALONE COULD GUARANTEE PEACE IN KOREA AND URGED ROKG TO INSIST ON (AN UNSPECIFIED) "GUARANTEE OF SECURITY ON THE KOREAN PENINSULA" AS A PRECONDITION TO ANY WITHDRAWAL. RECALLING MACARTHUR'S MEETING WITH TRUMAN ON WAKE ISLAND IN 1950, CHOSON ILBO NOTED IT'S STILL HARD TO JUDGE WHO WAS MORE REASONABLE, BUT HINTED ITS SYMPATHIES LAY WITH THE GENERAL. OVERALL, HOWEVER, PAPERS CONCLUDED THAT PROSPECT FOR CHANGE IN CARTER'S WITHDRAWAL POLICY IS "DIM" AND DREW FROM THEIR DISCUSSIONS ONLY SUCH MILD CONCLUSIONS AS NEED FOR MORE ATTENTION TO VIEWS OF WORKING-LEVEL OFFICIALS AND FOR "PRUDENT AND WISE JUDGMENT." SNEIDER

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